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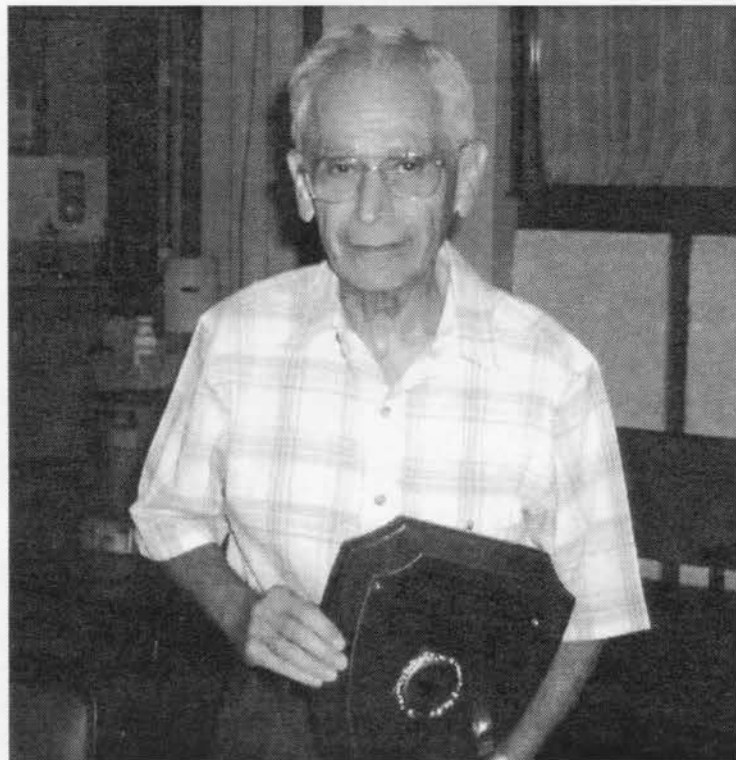
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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTHERN LEPIDOPTERISTS' SOCIETY
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J. BARRY LOMBARDINI: EDITOR

2003 JOHN ABBOT AWARD RECIPIENT IRVING L. FINKELSTEIN

I wish to thank the members of the Southern Lepidopterists' Society for honoring me with the John Abbot Award this year, especially so with two equally or, in my estimation, more deserving people on the ballot of nominees. It was an enormous surprise, and I'm deeply grateful to those members who thought my small contributions to the society and to my great passion, lepidoptera, were worthy of this prestigious award.



That passion has persisted for over 60 years now, and it shows no signs of abating! Indeed, with my headlong plunge into the world of moths in only the last ten years or so, I've embarked on a pursuit that will last me many lifetimes -- if only I could make a deal, like Dr. Faustus with Mephistopheles, for a few extra lifetimes! My special thanks are due to James Adams, who moved to Georgia in 1990, and whose encyclopedic knowledge of the moths and his infectious enthusiasm opened up this vast new arena of interest for me.

Although I discovered and fell in love with lepidoptera at the age of seven, I had a very difficult time fulfilling that love. Growing up in an era and within a milieu in which butterfly collecting was considered a "sissy" and perverse activity for a boy and adolescent,

my life was made even more difficult because my mother was unsympathetic and in fact detested all insects, even butterflies and moths. My essay, "Memories of Childhood . . . and Cecropias," (SLS NEWS, 24/4, Dec. 2002, 86-89) provides a hint of the obstacles I faced and had to overcome. Pursuing formal study and a career in entomology was out of the question, though that was what I wanted most of all. It was decided that I had some artistic talent, and I was sent off to art school, Pratt Institute, to get a degree in advertising design. Afterward, three excruciating years as a graphic designer in New York art studios and ad agencies convinced me I had to get out or go mad! I applied to graduate schools, and wound up at New York University, where I earned both my M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in art history.

I did not complete my education until I was 33, when I began my teaching career -- a year at Brandeis University, three at Southern Methodist University, and the final twenty-five years at Georgia State University. A rather late start in life, many would agree, but once I was employed and independent, I could finally come out of the closet and proclaim proudly, "I am a lepidopterist," and I began to collect openly, seriously and to make up for lost time. In 1972, I joined the Lepidopterists's Society and met many fine, like-minded people, amateur and professional. When I moved to Georgia, I was befriended by Lucien Harris, Jr., author of *The Butterflies of Georgia*, 1972, Abner Towers and Hermann Flaschka, all deceased now, and we regularly collected together, took field trips, and spent lots of time examining specimens and talking about our experiences. I avidly exchanged butterflies in the 1970's and '80's with collectors in the United States, Spain, France, Israel, Japan and elsewhere, and the collection grew exponentially. In 1978, I participated in the charter meeting of the SLS in Gainesville, organized by Dave Baggett, and met many more lepidopterists who were as enthusiastic and dedicated as I was -- many are still active today, twenty-five years later.

A major event in my life took place in June, 1980, when I participated in the first of many collecting expeditions to the tropics led by Tom Emmel. We explored various locations in Ecuador, both east and west of the Andes, and the trip was such an eye opener and so gratifying I subsequently took part in expeditions to Tingo Maria, Peru, to Rondonia, Brazil, to Yasuni, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Belize, Costa Rica and French Guiana. Also in 1980, while collecting with Abner Towers at the Ochopee Dunes in southeastern Georgia, I encountered a locally common day-flying Geometrid moth which, showy as it was and flying just off heavily traveled U.S. Highway 1, turned out to be a species new to science. Charles Covell and I described the moth, *Narraga georgiana* (*Journal of Research on the Lepidoptera*, 23/2, 1984, 161-168), and Abner Towers and I worked out the life history.

An important component of my lepidoptera work has been in life history study, and in this connection, I've become associated over the years more with the Diana Fritillary, *Speyeria diana*, than any other species. Highlights of this work have been the emergence of spectacular gynandromorphs, mosaics and other aberrations so rarely encountered in the field.

I retired from teaching at the end of 1996, and have since devoted myself full-time to collecting, rearing, updating and upgrading my collection and preparing it for its eventual donation to the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera Research, when I am no longer able to curate it effectively. I have been a Research Associate of the Florida State Collection of Arthropods since 1979, and have been donating all my "extras" on a regular basis. And the last few years have also seen me becoming more active in the SLS in supporting the fine work of the terrific folks among its members. Now I am fulfilled!

DEFINITIONS:

Legume: Any of a large family of herbs, shrubs, and trees, including the peas, beans, vetches, and clovers with usually compound leaves, flowers having a single carpel, and fruit that is a dry pod splitting along two sutures. A plant in the pea or bean family (Fabaceae).

Lunule (lunula): Any structure or marking in the shape of a crescent (as the whitish half-moon at the base of a fingernail). A crescent-shaped mark.